



# ***News Release***

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC SECURITY

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For Immediate Release

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## **DES WINS BONUS FOR INCREASED ADOPTIONS**

(PHOENIX, September 26, 2000) – The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has awarded the Department of Economic Security a \$496,220 federal bonus for increasing the number of children adopted from public foster care. The bonus is based on the 53% increase in adoptions from a baseline of 474 in 1998 to 727 in 1999. DES Director John L. Clayton stated, “We are very pleased to receive this bonus which will be used to allow us to find more permanent homes for children. We have made much progress but much more remains to be done especially in our efforts to find homes for children with special needs.”

The award is part of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 that makes available these financial incentives to states that increase adoptions of children in the foster care system. The award is based on demonstrated results by states that exceed the number of children adopted compared to the previous year.

Mr. Clayton credits the increase in adoptions in part to the following improvements:

- Increased emphasis on child specific recruitment which focuses on the special needs of each child. Individual recruitment plans were developed for children with no identified adoptive placement.



**1998 PIONEER AWARD FOR QUALITY**

- The Model Court legislation which was implemented statewide in 1999 has resulted in having children and families involved in abuse and neglect situations moving more quickly through the court system. This expedites the dependency and permanency planning process for children.
- DES has a statewide coordinator for foster and adoptive parent recruitment efforts working with community coalitions statewide to expand successful recruitment programs. These efforts include using regional and national adoption exchanges, using the Internet to promote the availability of children free for adoption, promoting active media campaigns and the use of the toll free number, 1-877-KIDS NEEDU, to increase awareness of children in need of adoptive homes. DES has also contracted with Aid to Adoption of Special Kids (AASK) for the recruitment of families for special needs children.

There are approximately 2,100 children currently in foster care with a case plan goal of adoption. These are children that will not be returning to their families and are in need of a permanent home. Of these, 246 are legally free for adoption and in need of an adoptive home. The federal bonus will be used to expand contracted services for these children who are awaiting adoption and to provide support services to children and families after adoptions are finalized.